VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS
NO. 19 – FRIDAY, 18 JUNE 2004

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MEETING OF PARLIAMENT
The Assembly met at 9.30 am, pursuant to adjournment. The Speaker (Honourable R K Hollis) read prayers.

EXTENSION OF MORNING SESSION
Due to an emergency situation arising in the Parliamentary Annexe this morning, Mr Speaker, by leave, extended the morning session to 10.40 am.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER – MATTER OF PRIVILEGE RAISED BY MINISTER FOR HEALTH
Mr Speaker made the following statement—

"On Wednesday 19 May 2004 the Minister for Health raised a matter of privilege in the House. Essentially the Minister is complaining about the conduct of the Member for Burnett in threatening in a telephone call the Chair of the Bundaberg District Health Council on account of a letter to the editor written by the Chair.

The stated grounds are “unprecedented behaviour by a Member of Parliament which breaches the Code of Ethical Standards by which all Members of Parliament are bound”.

Section 37 of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 provides a definition of “contempt” of the Assembly. Conduct, including words is not a contempt unless it amounts to or is intended or likely to amount to an improper interference with the free exercise of the functions or authority of the Assembly or a committee or the free performance of Members’ duties as a member.

I must determine whether a matter of privilege is involved.

The Code of Ethical Standards contains an ethical framework for Members by providing an overview of current obligations which Members are bound to observe. It contains a statement of fundamental principles but these are not themselves enforceable, but are aspirational.

The general principles, laws or precedents of parliamentary privilege and contempt still apply and are the litmus test as to whether a matter of privilege is involved.

It is a long acknowledged contempt of the House to attempt to obstruct Members in the discharge of their duty. This includes actions (or attempts) to molest, improperly reflect and intimidate Members. It is also a contempt to attempt by improper means to influence Members in the performance of their duties.

Similar contempts involve attempts to obstruct or improperly influence witnesses to the House or a committee or Officers of the House in the execution of their duty.

I can find no precedent for treating as a contempt the allegations made, even should they be substantiated.

The conduct, even if substantiated, would not appear to fall within the definition of contempt in s 37 of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001."

Speaker’s ruling: Mr Speaker ruled that he was satisfied that no matter of privilege is involved.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER – MATTER OF PRIVILEGE RAISED BY THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
Mr Speaker made the following statement—

"Yesterday morning the Leader of the Opposition as a matter of privilege raised the issue of my rulings on questions on notice.

The Leader of the Opposition stated that I had ruled questions on notice seeking ministerial responses on issues going back longer than three years—either calendar or financial—are not in order.

The Leader of the Opposition stated that there appeared to be no precedent for the ruling.

I agree, there is no precedent for ruling out of order questions on notice seeking ministerial responses on issues going back longer than three years.

But I have not made any such ruling."
In this Parliament I have mainly ruled part of questions out of order rather than ruling the entire question out of order, and have ordered the modification of those questions.

To be precise and for the record:

- I have ruled part of 15 questions on notice out of order for being too detailed and unduly lengthy.
- I have ruled out of order two other questions for the same reason.
- I have ruled one preamble in a question out of order because it contained unnecessary statements of fact.
- I ruled one question out of order because it did not relate to the Minister’s responsibilities.
- Earlier this week I ordered the modification of another question because it contained offensive and unparliamentary language.

In summary, in this Parliament I have ruled out of order two questions on notice and parts of 17 others and the modification of another.

Therefore, in total I have made rulings and modifications in respect of approximately 20 questions out of the 740 asked thus far this Parliament.

Contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition has stated, in no instance have I ruled questions on notice seeking ministerial responses on issues going back longer than three years out of order on those grounds.

The rulings that I have made in the main relate to the rules contained in Standing Order 69B(b) and (h) which both refer to questions being brief, relating to one issue and not being unduly lengthy.

It is my interpretation of these Standing Orders, and I stand by my view, that these provisions not only aim to limit the mere word count in a question, but go to the overall reasonableness of the question.

I do not believe that Standing Orders contemplated some of the questions that I have ruled out of order, where members in craftily worded, but non-verbose questions seek information on a number of issues over many years. Members are in effect seeking to subvert Standing Orders by asking in one question a series of questions.

To assist me in dealing with these questions, I have as a rule of thumb limited each question to asking for information over no more than a three year period. I do not believe that I have ever limited further questions on the issue over another period.

An alternative approach is to simply rule the question out of order and not attempt to modify it.

I have no difficulty in any question being put to a Minister relating to public affairs with which they are officially connected, to proceedings pending in the Legislative Assembly, or to any matter of administration for which they are responsible.

I have no concern if the question relates to a matter 10, 50 or 100 years in the past. There is no time limit.

In the last Parliament I made two and in this Parliament so far, I have made one statement about the number of issues contained within and the length of questions. I trust that all members will now abide by these rules."

**STATEMENT BY SPEAKER – RETIREMENT OF COL SCHNEIDER**

Mr Speaker made the following statement—

"I would like to add my best wishes to Col Schneider who is on his final day in this chamber. I consider Colin to be a personal friend, and from the number of messages to Colin that I have read, it is obvious that many others consider him in the same light.

Col has worked with me for the last six years and as part of the Speaker’s team he will be missed by all of us that have had the pleasure of working with him.

Since Colin announced his retirement I have had many people express to me their regret at his departure and include their best wishes for his retirement. To name a few — the Governor of
Queensland Quentin Bryce, members of the consular corp, Ministers, Members, members of the Premier’s protocol staff and many other staff members including those from departments.

On behalf of Colin I would like to thank the Premier and others for their kind words yesterday.

Colin will be missed by us all – I wish you Colin and Ruth a safe and happy retirement, and may you have many years to spend with your wonderful grandchildren.

Thank you again for your contribution and friendship."

**STATEMENT BY SPEAKER – RETIREMENT OF HELGA ALEMSON**

Mr Speaker made the following statement—

"I would also like to mention the retirement last month of another long serving staff member.

Mrs Helga Alemson, Deputy Librarian at the Queensland Parliamentary Library, retired after more than 33 years of service to this Parliament.

Helga was appointed to the Queensland Parliamentary Library in 1971. Upon appointment she was ahead of her time in recognising the need for a computer assisted retrieval system and proceeded to develop one specifically suited to parliamentary clients. The system was first known as AIRS-Qasar and was unique in its time. In its redeveloped form it is now known as Concord and is in use in the Library today giving Members and staff 24 hour access to their Library through an internet interface.

In addition to her outstanding contributions to the Queensland Parliamentary Library, Helga represented the Queensland Parliament at numerous interstate and overseas forums, gaining widespread recognition for her innovations.

Helga was not only interested in cutting edge innovations, she was also responsible for the promotion of the Library’s heritage collections, in particular the O’Donovan Collection. During the 1990s, Helga’s efforts were integral to having the significance of this Collection recognised as a Queensland cultural asset.

In 1997, Helga was appointed as a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia in recognition of her outstanding work within the Queensland Parliamentary Library.

Helga’s contribution to this Parliament is appreciated and recognised. I am sure Members will join me in wishing her well in her retirement."

**PETITIONS**

The following paper petitions, lodged with the Clerk by the Members indicated, were received—

Mr Hoolihan from 432 petitioners requesting the House to give relief to pensioners in the form of a rebate on added taxes.

Mr Springborg from 3,002 petitioners requesting the House to give careful consideration to steps being undertaken by Government to overcome the pending disastrous situation regarding Public Liability Insurance as by present indication, insurance is going to be too expensive or not available at all.

Mr English from 631 petitioners requesting the House to place a permanent paramedic on Macleay Island to enhance service delivery.

**MINISTERIAL PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK**

The following ministerial paper was tabled by The Clerk—

*Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas)*—

Response from the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (Mr Lucas) to a paper petition presented by Mrs Lavarch from 16 petitioners regarding provision of traffic lights, including pedestrian crossings at the existing Petrie roundabout

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS** (Hansard p. 1647, 9.50 am)

(a) Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) made a ministerial statement relating to the 2004 Noosa Longweekend.
(b) Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) made a ministerial statement relating to the forthcoming Community Cabinet Meeting at the Gold Coast.

(c) Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) made a ministerial statement relating to a visit by Mr Christian Saunders and a possible increase in Queensland's share of the United Nations' procurement business.

(d) Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) made a ministerial statement relating to the United Nations World Refugee Day.

(e) Minister for Education and the Arts (Ms Bligh) made a ministerial statement relating to the Report of the Ministerial Taskforce on Inclusive Education.

Papers: Ms Bligh, during her statement, tabled the following papers—
Report of the Ministerial Taskforce on Inclusive Education (students with disabilities) – June 2004
Government Response to the Report of the Ministerial Taskforce on Inclusive Education (students with disabilities) – June 2004

(f) Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations (Mr Barton) made a ministerial statement relating to apprenticeships in Queensland.

MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE – NEW STANDING RULES AND ORDERS OF THE PARLIAMENT OF QUEENSLAND (Hansard p. 1650, 9.59 am)
Leader of the House (Ms Bligh), by leave, moved – That the Standing Orders as recommended by the Standing Orders Committee and tabled by the Premier in the House yesterday, and the Sessional Orders circulated in my name in the Chamber today, be adopted and binding from 31 August 2004.
Debate ensued.
Question put and agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION (Hansard p. 1651, 10.04 am)
A personal explanation was made by Mr Malone.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON TRAVELSAFE – PAPER
Chair of the Select Committee on Travelsafe (Mr Pearce) tabled the following paper—
Select Committee on Travelsafe—
Issues Paper No. 8 – Inquiry into Crashes Involving Driver and Rider Fatigue in Queensland

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE (Hansard p. 1651, 10.07 am)
Questions without notice were asked.
Paper: Leader of the Opposition (Mr Springborg) tabled the following paper—
Statistics relating to the backpacker industry in Australia
Questions continued.

Papers: Premier and Minister for Trade (Mr Beattie) tabled the following papers—
Article from The Courier-Mail, dated 18 June 2004, titled US favours sugar rivals
Article from The Australian, dated 18 June 2004, titled Ethanol to raise fuel cost
Article from The Courier-Mail, dated 17 June 2004, titled Ethanol: Brazil's lesson to us
Questions continued.

Paper: Mr McArdle tabled the following paper—
Departmental memorandum, dated 19 December 2003, from Station Officer Shane Pasterfield to Area Director Greg Adams
Questions continued.

Papers: Mr Sullivan tabled the following papers—
Campaign promotional material by Liberal Candidate Norm Wyndham
Letter, dated 28 February 2004, from Mr Sullivan to Mr Wyndham
Letter, dated 2 March 2004, from Mr Wyndham to Mr Sullivan
Questions continued.
Questions continued.
Questions concluded.

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL and APPROPRIATION BILL** (Hansard p. 1657, 10.40 am)
Order of the day read for the adjourned debate on the motion of the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport (Mr Mackenroth) – That the Bills be now read a second time.
Debate resumed.

*Papers:* Mrs E Cunningham, by leave, during her speech, tabled the following papers—
Documents relating to Gladstone Engineering Alliance

Debate continued.
Question put and agreed to.

*Bills referred to Estimates Committees*—
In accordance with the Sessional Orders adopted by the House on 30 April 2003, the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill and the Appropriation Bill were referred to the Estimates Committees for consideration and report.

**DUTIES AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)** (Hansard p. 1700, 4.08 pm)
Order of the day read for the adjourned debate on the motion of the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport (Mr Mackenroth) – That the Bill be now read a second time.
Debate ensued.
Question put and agreed to.
Bill read a second time.
Bill committed on the motion of Mr Mackenroth.

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*IN COMMITTEE*

Clauses 1 to 8, as read, agreed to.
Schedule, as read, agreed to.
Bill to be reported without amendment.

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*IN THE HOUSE*

Bill reported without amendment.
Mr Mackenroth, by leave, moved – That the Bill be now read a third time.
Question put and agreed to.
Bill read a third time and passed.
Title agreed to.

**SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT**
Acting Leader of the House (Mr Mackenroth) moved – That this House at its rising do adjourn until 9.30 am on Tuesday, 17 August 2004.
Question put and agreed to.

**ADJOURNMENT** (Hansard p. 1703, 4.26 pm)
Acting Leader of the House (Mr Mackenroth) moved – That the House do now adjourn.
Debate ensued.
Question put and agreed to.
The House adjourned at 4.54 pm.
ATTENDANCE

The following members were present—


R K HOLLIS
SPEAKER

N J LAURIE
CLERK OF THE PARLIAMENT